



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

**Report following monitoring
Level of follow-up: Estyn Review**

**Cefn Primary School
Greenfield Avenue
Glyncoch
Pontypridd
Rhondda Cynon Taf
CF37 3BD**

Date of visit: January 2020

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and
Training in Wales**

Outcome of visit

The Fern Federation of Cefn Primary School and Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary School is judged to have made insufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspections.

As a result, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is increasing the level of follow-up activity.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school is in need of significant improvement. The school will draw up an action plan which shows how it is going to address the recommendations.

Estyn inspectors will re-visit the school following receipt of the action plan, to ensure that it is suitable and likely to bring about the required improvement. Inspectors will visit the school again in a further 12 months' time to monitor progress in addressing the recommendations.

Under the provisions of Section 39 (9) of the Education Act 2005, every annual report to parents prepared by the governing body under Section 30 of the Education Act 2002 must include a statement on the progress made in implementing the action plan.

Progress since the last inspection

R1. Establish stable and effective leadership and teaching teams

Since the core inspection, there have been several notable changes in leadership across the Fern Federation. Currently, the executive headteacher of the federation is absent. The head of school at Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has taken this role temporarily and is now sharing her time between the two schools in the federation. The head of school of Cefn Primary has left the school and an acting head of school has been in place since September 2019. Plans for the ongoing leadership of the federation and, therefore both schools, are unclear and remain unstable. As a result, progress in addressing many aspects of this and other recommendations since the core inspection have lacked urgency and rigour.

To date, leaders' actions and strategies have had a suitable impact on a very few areas of school life. For example, they have ensured that pupils have suitable opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. However, many of the issues identified during the core inspection still require improvement, for example, addressing the progress of less able pupils and raising the standards of writing across the school. Very recently, the acting executive headteacher, supported by the acting head of school, have started to address the other shortcomings. Both understand the need for all staff to work cohesively across the federation to make further improvements. Over the last few weeks, they have set out a focused plan that identifies actions that

staff and governors need to take to address remaining shortcomings. Teachers have helped to scrutinise and sharpen this plan, and, as a result, understand their roles better. However, this has not yet had time to lead to any notable improvements.

Since the core inspection, the school's teaching team has changed significantly and the school's future staffing structure is unknown. A minority of teachers have temporary contracts. This affects the stability of teaching teams and the pace at which the school has been able to make progress towards its improvement priorities. As a result, the pupils in Cefn Primary have lacked the consistency in teaching and learning that the pupils in Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary have received.

Members of the governing body receive a range of useful information from school leaders, including reports on staffing, pupils' attendance and the school's budget. They use this information carefully to support leaders in running the school. They challenge leaders appropriately about issues, such as spending. However, a majority of governors have too little first-hand information about the quality of provision and pupils' standards. They do not challenge leaders enough about the slow progress a minority of pupils make over time. Their role in holding leaders to account for these important areas of school life across the federation is limited.

Overall, the continuing instability of the federation's leadership team hinders the progress made in this recommendation in both schools. Leaders have not thought or planned strategically well enough across the federation. Craig-Yr-Hesg Primary has benefitted from more stable and stronger leadership and has therefore made stronger progress in addressing its recommendations. The vision of both schools working effectively as one federation has only recently started to materialise. Very recently, the two schools have begun to operate as a more effective federation, with leaders facilitating beneficial cross school working and mentorship. However, these arrangements have not had time to embed and lead to any notable improvements.

R2. Improve monitoring and school improvement processes to ensure they focus on raising standards for pupils

Leaders undertake a limited range of monitoring activities to enable them to identify strengths and shortcomings in the school's provision and teaching. For example, they undertake learning walks, lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work competently. Leaders with responsibility for areas of learning scrutinise pupils' work carefully across both schools and this helps them to monitor progress towards the school and federation's improvement priorities. However, school leaders have not ensured that there is a clear strategic plan for this work that evaluates progress towards targets systematically over a suitable period of time. In too many cases, monitoring is not evaluative enough and does not focus sharply enough on the standards that pupils achieve. Leaders do not share their evaluations well enough with teachers and this means they do not understand what they are doing well and how they can improve their practice. This limits the effectiveness of monitoring activities and the impact that these processes have on pupils' standards.

The federation has a suitable post inspection action plan that considers recommendations from the core inspection appropriately across both schools. This plan identifies a suitable range of relevant actions to address identified shortcomings. However, not all teachers and leaders understand fully what leaders are trying to achieve or their role in taking the school forward and this hinders their effectiveness and the pace of progress. Occasionally, the federation's strategies do not focus well enough on improving pupil's standards.

R3. Improve the quality of teaching and ensure any grouping arrangements across classes enable pupils of all abilities to make effective progress

Teaching groups in the federation were rearranged into mixed ability classes in September 2019. As a result, many teachers now feel more able to plan for and deliver lessons that meet the needs of all their pupils. Planning has improved appropriately and outlines a range of suitably challenging tasks for all pupils. These changes are having a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and the quality of teaching across the school. However, the delay in leaders addressing this recommendation across the federation has resulted in a minority of pupils, especially the less able, making slower than expected progress.

Since September, all teachers have accessed beneficial professional learning activities to support their understanding of best practice. The majority now demonstrate a more consistent approach to delivering engaging learning experiences and many are beginning to follow the school's marking and feedback policy. The majority have high expectations of their pupils and set suitable challenging tasks according to their ability.

In the foundation phase, many teachers have established effective routines that children are familiar with and follow with increasing independence. They have made good progress in developing the learning environment to support this. For example, they have established writing, mathematics and digital learning areas for pupils and provide them with an engaging range of tasks within these areas of learning. Many pupils undertake these tasks positively. At the end of the foundation phase, opportunities for pupils to direct their own learning and engage in more independent tasks are limited and do not always match pupils' needs or interests well enough. As a result, many pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of.

Across key stage 2, most teachers have improved the quality of their classroom practice. For example, many lessons proceed at a suitable pace. These teachers establish productive professional relationships, and expect their pupils to work hard and try their best. As a result, the majority of pupils work diligently and many behave well. Many teachers work with colleagues collaboratively to plan and share their ideas. By involving pupils in decisions about what they would like to learn, they improve learning experiences appropriately. As a result, the majority of pupils are better engaged in their learning and enjoy new opportunities to participate in exciting

activities. For example, in Year 6 many pupils' became successful entrepreneurs, designing and creating Christmas gifts and selling them to make a substantial profit.

R4. Raise standards in writing

Following the core inspection, leaders undertook an audit to identify clear areas for improvement. The subject leader for English worked closely with regional advisers and arranged purposeful training for all staff. This enabled staff to follow a range of effective classroom strategies to improve pupils' writing skills. For example, leaders they have mapped out a comprehensive range of writing genres and supported teachers to build these into their classroom topics. This is helping to ensure that pupils develop a wider understanding of different styles of writing. Leaders have visited another school and used their findings to develop a systematic structure for teaching phonics skills in the foundation phase. Similarly, a whole-school spelling strategy ensures an improved focus on this important area of learning. However, not all teachers apply these strategies consistently well. For example, in the foundation phase, the overuse of writing frames limits pupils' opportunities to write at length. While there have been some improvements in pupils' writing, standards are not yet strong enough.

Towards the end of the foundation phase, a minority of pupils write enthusiastically for different purposes, for example when writing a recount of the Great Fire of London. Many write sentences that make sense to the reader. Many pupils follow a structure efficiently when given support, for example when writing an animal fact file. However, a minority do not use capital letters and full stops consistently and a majority do not spell well enough.

As pupils progress through key stage 2, the majority make suitable progress in developing their writing skills. By Year 4, the majority of pupils organise writing into logical sequences and many use simple adjectives to enliven their work. A few use paragraphs to structure their writing effectively. Towards the end of the key stage, the majority of pupils are beginning to write interesting pieces that include a useful range of descriptions that helps make their work engaging for the reader. They understand a suitable range of genres and structure their writing, such as play scripts, stories and biographies, accordingly. A few more able pupils write effective introductions that establish the context for their writing, for example when writing a fiction story. A majority of pupils are beginning to edit their work to reduce errors competently and add a variety of description or explanation to up-level their work. However, a minority do not use paragraphs well enough, their spelling and punctuation is not secure, and they still use capital letters inaccurately in sentences.

R5. Ensure all teachers give pupils appropriate opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills effectively across the curriculum

Since the core inspection, subject leaders across the federation have worked with teachers and regional consortia advisors to ensure that all pupils experience a

greater range of opportunities to apply their skills across the curriculum. All have attended appropriately planned workshops to enhance their understanding of numeracy, literacy and ICT. A few staff have benefitted from opportunities to visit other schools to view good practice and to gain a greater understanding of how to ensure they provide a wide range of relevant experiences. Whilst there have been a few worthwhile improvements in this area, the progression of skills across the curriculum is not consistently applied by all teachers and leaders do not always identify this through monitoring processes.

Generally, provision for numeracy has improved. Planning is more systematic and progressive. As a result, many pupils are beginning to use and apply their numeracy skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum. For example, in reception, pupils follow a sequence and pattern as they create the tail of a dragon when celebrating Chinese New Year. In Year 6, a few more able of pupils use their number skills well to work within a budget when planning a trip to see the rugby world cup and present their work using multimedia presentations. While there are improvements in the application of mathematical skills across the curriculum, a few teachers do not always identify enough useful opportunities when planning for pupils to engage in these activities. At times the level of work offered does not always match the pupils' ability well enough.

Many teachers plan suitable opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through other areas of study. The subject leader for English has developed a comprehensive genre map, which ensures a good range of experiences for these skills across all age groups. Many staff follow this and, as a result, the majority of pupils write for a good range of purposes. For example, in reception, more able pupils write a simple sentence about their science work and in upper key stage 2, many pupils produce a non-chronological report about Buddhism as part of work on other faiths and cultures. Overall, provision for literacy across the curriculum has improved suitably. However, many of the writing activities undertaken do not encourage pupils to write at length, as a result, there are missed opportunities for pupils to practise and further improve their writing skills.

Progress in developing opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills is improving appropriately. Leaders have reviewed provision and developed schemes of work that support all teachers when planning for coverage and progression. Across the school, many pupils are making suitable progress applying their ICT skills across different subject areas. For example, a many of reception pupils scan QR codes and take photographs independently. By the time pupils reach Year 6, the majority use ICT effectively, for instance in science investigations and when creating databases for presenting market research.

R6. Improve pupils' attendance

The school has implemented worthwhile strategies to promote and support good attendance since the core inspection. Initiatives such the 'attendance challenge' and

dedicated celebration assemblies to recognise class and individual pupil achievements have raised awareness of the importance of regular attendance. More recently, the appointment of a family engagement officer has begun to have a positive impact on raising levels of pupil attendance and reducing lateness.

School leaders track and monitor all pupils' attendance carefully. This allows them to identify pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern and to follow this up appropriately. They inform parents effectively by sending out termly attendance letters and sharing attendance data in regular newsletters. The school works closely with the attendance welfare service and follows any advice offered effectively. Leaders invite targeted families to attendance meetings that offer them support, and this has led to measurable improvements in the attendance of many pupils.

Following consultations with parents, the school has made useful and supportive changes to procedures at the start of the school day. Leaders set high expectations for pupils to arrive on time and for lessons to begin promptly. Class teachers and teaching assistants take turns to welcome pupils at the school door every morning, along with the head of school. This provides useful contact between parents and school staff, and gives a clear signal that the school day has started. It allows teachers to be in their classrooms ready to greet pupils and begin the day's learning in a calm purposeful atmosphere.

Overall, the actions taken since the core inspection have improved pupils' attendance and punctuality well.

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